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9  
10 Attorneys for Defendant  
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
in *Guardado, et al. v. City and County of San Franicsco*  
Case No. 3:22-cv-4319-TLT

11 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

12 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

13 SELINA KEENE, MELODY FOUNTILA,  
14 MARK MCCLURE,  
15 Plaintiffs,

16 vs.  
17 CITY and COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO;  
18 LONDON BREED, Mayor of San Francisco in  
19 her official capacity; CAROL ISEN, Human  
Resources Director, City and County of San  
Francisco, in her official capacity; DOES 1-  
100,  
20 Defendants.

Case No. 4:22-cv-01587-JSW

**DECLARATION OF ADAM M. SHAPIRO IN  
SUPPORT OF ADMINISTRATIVE MOTION  
TO CONSIDER WHETHER CASES SHOULD  
BE RELATED**

**(Civil L.R. 3-12(b) and 7-11)**

21 DAVID GOZUM,  
22 Plaintiff,  
23 vs.  
24 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
25 HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY, AND DOES  
1 TO 100,  
26 Defendants.

Case No. 4:22-cv-03975-KAW

1 JOSE GUARDADO, MELISSA BORZONI,  
2 ANDREW MALONEY, ROMMEL  
3 TAYLOR, PENNI EIGSTER, TARA  
4 AMADO, and DANIELLE BOLOGNA on  
5 behalf of themselves and all other similarly  
6 situated persons,

7 Plaintiffs,  
8

vs.

9  
10 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN  
11 FRANCISCO; and DOES 1 through  
12 100,  
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Case No. 3:22-cv-4319-TLT

1 I, Adam Shapiro, declare as follows:

2 1. I am a Deputy City Attorney with the City and County of San Francisco (the "City").

3 Except as expressly stated herein, I have a personal knowledge of the matters set forth below and, if  
4 called as a witness, could and would testify truthfully thereto.

5 2. The City met and conferred with plaintiffs' counsel in the *Keene* and *Guardado* Actions  
6 before filing this motion.

7 3. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 1** is a true and correct copy of the Complaint filed in the  
8 *Keene* Action, which is Docket No. 1 in that action.

9 4. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 2** is a true and correct copy of the Court's Order granting  
10 the City's Motion to Dismiss and Denying the Plaintiff's Motion for a Preliminary Injunction in the  
11 *Keene* Action, which is Docket No. 31 in that action.

12 5. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 3** is a true and correct copy of the First Amended Complaint  
13 in the *Gozum* Action.

14 6. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 4** is a true and correct copy of the Notice of Removal in the  
15 *Gozum* Action, which is Docket No. 1 in that action.

16 7. Attached hereto as **Exhibit 5** is a true and correct copy of the Complaint in the  
17 *Guardado* Putative Class Action, which is Docket No. 1 in that action.

18 I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the United States of America that the  
19 foregoing is true and correct. October 7, 2022 at San Francisco California.

20  
21  
22  
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24  
25  
26  
27  
28



ADAM SHAPIRO

# **EXHIBIT 1**

**EXHIBIT 1**

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*Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

SELINA KEENE, MELODY FOUNTILA, MARK ) Case No.:  
MCCLURE, )

Plaintiffs, ) **VERIFIED COMPLAINT FOR**  
v. ) **INJUNCTIVE AND DECLARATORY**  
 ) **RELIEF, DAMAGES**  
 )  
CITY and COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO; )  
LONDON BREED, Mayor of San Francisco in her ) [Demand for Jury Trial]  
official capacity; CAROL ISEN, Human Resources )  
Director, City and County of San Francisco, in her )  
official capacity; DOES 1-100, )  
 )  
Defendants. )

1. COME NOW Plaintiffs SELINA KEENE, MELODY FOUNTILA, and MARK  
1  
2 MCCLURE, employees of Defendant CITY and COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO (hereinafter  
3 CCSF), seeking declaratory and injunctive relief, in the form of a preliminary and permanent  
4 injunction, barring Defendants, and all those in active concert, from abridging Plaintiffs'  
5 constitutionally and statutorily protected fundamental rights guaranteed by the First Amendment,  
6 Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act  
7 (FEHA). Plaintiffs also seek damages for violation of those same civil rights.  
8

9 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

10 2. This Court has jurisdiction and venue over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331,  
11 1343, and 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1988 because the Defendants are violating Plaintiffs'  
12 civil rights; and 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-5(f)(3), which confers original jurisdiction on federal district  
13 courts to address the deprivation of rights, privileges, and immunities secured by the United States  
14 Constitution and federal law, and the general legal and equitable powers of this Court,  
15 which empower this Court to grant the requested relief.  
16

17 3. Plaintiffs' claims for declaratory and injunctive relief are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§  
18 2201-2202, and Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, Rule 57 and 65.

19 4. Supplemental Jurisdiction of this Court is invoked pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1337 over the  
20 State law claims which are so related to the federal claims in this action that they form part of the  
21 same case or controversy under Article III of the U.S. Constitution.  
22

23 5. This Court has the authority to award Plaintiffs' attorneys' fees and costs associated  
24 with this action pursuant to 42 U.S.C. §§ 1983 and 1988 and other applicable laws.

25 6. Venue is proper within this judicial district and division, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §  
26 1331(b) because the relevant events have occurred and are threatened to occur in this jurisdictional  
27 district and division.  
28

## The Vaccine Mandate

7. On June 23, 2021, CCSF demanded that all 35,000 of its employees be vaccinated against COVID-19 or risk losing their jobs. The requirement would take effect once a COVID-19 vaccine received full authorization from the Food and Drug Administration. Due to the FDA's authorization of the Pfizer vaccine, the mandate was revised. Thereafter, in a mandate issued by Defendant LONDON BREED, all CCSF workers were to be vaccinated by November 1, 2021.

## PARTIES

## Plaintiffs

8. Plaintiff SELINA KEENE, is and was at all times relevant to this action a qualified/eligible employee of Defendant CCSF, within the meaning of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Plaintiff resides in Contra Costa County, California. MS. KEENE is a Christian who believes in the sanctity of life. She is opposed to the vaccines because they were derived from stem cells from aborted fetuses, in direct contradiction to her Christian beliefs. Based on her sincerely held religious beliefs, KEENE requested a religious accommodation to the vaccine mandate. She responded to CCSF questionnaires about her religious beliefs; however, her request for accommodation to the vaccine mandate imposed by Defendant LONDON BREED was denied without explanation. KEENE also requested a medical exemption based on her a-fib condition; that request was also denied. The mandate at issue was implemented by Defendant CAROL ISEN, who as head of the CCSF's HR Department is responsible for implementing the vaccine mandates against all CCSF employees. In January 2022, KEENE contracted COVID-19 and recovered. She now has natural immunity.

9. Plaintiff MELODY FOUNTILA is and was at all times relevant to this action a qualified/eligible employee of Defendant CCSF, working for the CCSF within the meaning of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Plaintiff

1 resides in Contra Costa County, California. She was infected with and survived COVID-19.  
2 FOUNTILA is a Christian who believes in the sanctity of life. She is opposed to taking the current  
3 vaccines because they are derived from aborted fetal stem cells, in direct contradiction to her  
4 Christian beliefs. FOUNTILA responded to CCSF questionnaires about her religious beliefs;  
5 however, her request for accommodation to the vaccine mandate imposed by Defendant  
6 LONDON BREED was denied without explanation. The mandate at issue was implemented by  
7 Defendant CAROL ISEN, who as head of the CCSF's HR Department is responsible for  
8 implementing the vaccine mandates against all CCSF employees. FOUNTILA also requested a  
9 medical exemption based on the fact that she has natural immunity to COVID-19. Her medical  
10 exemption request was also denied.  
11

12 10. Plaintiff MARK MCCLURE is and was at all times relevant to this action a  
13 qualified/eligible employee of Defendant CCSF, within the meaning of the California Fair  
14 Employment and Housing Act and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Plaintiff resides in San Mateo  
15 County, California. MR. MCCLURE is a Christian. He is opposed to taking the vaccines because  
16 they are derived from aborted fetal stem cells, in direct violation of his Christian beliefs. He  
17 responded to CCSF questionnaires about his religious beliefs; however, his request for  
18 accommodation to the vaccine mandate imposed by Defendant LONDON BREED was denied  
19 without explanation. The mandate at issue was implemented by Defendant CAROL ISEN, who as  
20 head of the CCSF's HR Department is responsible for implementing the vaccine mandates against  
21 all CCSF employees.  
22

23 11. All Plaintiffs have received right to sue letters from the EEOC or the DFEH.  
24

## 25 **Defendants**

26 12. Defendant CCSF is a qualified/eligible employer within the meaning of the California  
27 Fair Employment and Housing Act and Title VII and conducting its operations in San Francisco  
28

1 County. It employs Plaintiffs FOUNTILA, KEENE, and MCCLURE. It is an administrative and  
2 political subdivision of California that consists of a geographic region with specific boundaries  
3 and some level of governmental authority.

4 13. Defendant LONDON BREED is and was at all times relevant to this action Mayor of  
5 the City of San Francisco. She resides in San Francisco County. She is sued in her official  
6 capacity. The Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco is the head of the executive branch  
7 of the San Francisco City and County government. This officeholder has the duty to enforce city  
8 laws and the power to either approve or veto bills passed by the San Francisco Board of  
9 Supervisors. Because of San Francisco's status as a consolidated city-county, the Mayor also  
10 serves as the head of government of the County and can issue executive orders and/or mandates,  
11 and did in fact issue a vaccine mandate for all CCSF employees.

12 14. Defendant CAROL ISEN is and was at all times relevant to this action head of  
13 the Human Resources Department of CCSF. She is being sued in her official capacity. The HR  
14 Department is tasked with maximizing employee productivity and protecting CCSF from any  
15 issues that may arise within the workforce. HR responsibilities include compensation and benefits,  
16 recruitment, firing, and keeping up to date with any laws that may affect the company and its  
17 employees. The Human Resources Department executes the Mayor's vaccine mandate by  
18 terminating employees that are not vaccinated. For purposes of this litigation, termination  
19 includes, but is not limited to, being placed on forced administrative leave or having employees  
20 use up their accrued benefits, such as FMLA time, sick time, and vacation time while waiting out  
21 the results of this litigation.

22 15. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate, associate, or otherwise,  
23 of DOES 1 through 100, inclusive are unknown to Plaintiffs at this time, who therefore sue said  
24 Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiffs are informed and believe and thereon allege that

each of the fictitiously named Defendants are in some way responsible for, or participated in, or contributed to, the matters and things complained of herein, and are legally responsible in some manner. Plaintiffs will seek leave to amend this Complaint when the true names, capacities, participation, and responsibilities have been ascertained.

16. Plaintiffs are informed and believe, and thereon allege, that at all times herein mentioned, that CCSF and Defendants named in this action as well as the fictitiously named Defendants, and each of them, were agents and employees of each other, and in so doing the things hereinafter complained of, were acting within the course and scope of such agency and/or employment and with the knowledge and consent of the remaining Defendants.

## STATEMENT OF FACTS

17. Plaintiffs herein incorporate paragraphs 1-16. Due to the vaccine mandates, supra, Plaintiffs have been forced to take administrative leave and to use sick time, vacation time, and FMLA time in order to mitigate their damages and to “buy” time while this litigation progresses.

18. Plaintiff FOUNTILA experienced hostility from vaccinated co-workers and had to check her feelings and emotions. She now loses sleep over the prospect of not being able to support herself. Assuming that CCSF wants their staff to have immunity to COVID-19, FOUNTILA's termination is especially egregious because she has natural immunity to the disease.

19. Plaintiff MCCLURE lost his pension and at age sixty (60) and worries about trying to search for another job. His employment with CCSF had been a reliable source of income, and at his age it is a hardship to seek full time employment. His family income has been cut in half. He can no longer afford health care. His mortgage payments are in jeopardy, and his utility bills are now unaffordable.

20. Plaintiff KEENE has an a-fib condition; that condition was exacerbated by stress incident to her fear of loss of income, medical benefits, promotional opportunities, retirement

1 income, and payments for her medical insurance. As a result, KEENE was forced to take disability  
2 leave on October 27, 2021. Because of her reduced income, she is in jeopardy of losing her home  
3 and is struggling to pay her utility bills.

4       21. The Defendants arbitrarily and unreasonably implemented the mandates. The mandates  
5 fail to address the reality that unvaccinated employees with accommodations can safely perform  
6 their job duties while protecting themselves, fellow employees, and the community they serve  
7 through non-pharmaceutical interventions, such as daily health screenings, wearing masks,  
8 quarantining, and in some cases, telecommuting for work. Before the mandate was implemented,  
9 the Plaintiffs were called heroes for staying on the job and working through the worst of the  
10 COVID-19 pandemic. During that time, the Defendants relied on weekly testing, wearing masks  
11 and PPE, and telecommuting as the primary means of protecting the peace, health, and safety of  
12 the public, other employees, and themselves. Now Plaintiffs are being terminated because they do  
13 not want to take a vaccine that violates their protected religious beliefs, and because the  
14 Defendants will not admit the efficacy of the prior means of protecting the public and their  
15 employees.

16       22. The mandates at issue ignore peer-reviewed studies comparing naturally acquired and  
17 vaccine acquired immunity. Those studies show overwhelmingly that natural immunity provides  
18 equivalent or greater protection against severe infection from COVID-19 than immunity generated  
19 by mRNA vaccines. The Defendants do not and cannot point to any evidence that vaccinated  
20 individuals have longer lasting or more complete immunity than those who have recovered from  
21 COVID-19. Early data also suggests that naturally acquired immunity may provide greater  
22 protection against COVID-19 variants than vaccine-induced immunity.

23       23. CCSF's refusal to allow an opt out, especially for employees with naturally acquired  
24 immunity, is not based on science. In line with this unreasonable and arbitrary refusal, CCSF does  
25

1 not provide any process for employees to submit test results showing antibodies that provide  
2 natural immunity from COVID-19.

3 24. The mandates further presume that requiring vaccination of an individual that has  
4 already contracted and recovered from COVID-19 will not cause any short-term or long-term  
5 injuries. This presumption is based on absolutely no evidence and is purely conjectural.  
6

#### **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

##### **Violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 42 U.S.C. § 2000e *et seq.* (Against All Named Defendants)**

9 25. Paragraphs 1 through 24 are hereby incorporated and realleged as though fully set forth  
10 herein.  
11

12 26. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. § 2000e *et seq.*, provides broad  
13 workplace protections for people of sincere religious faith.

14 27. Among other protections, it is generally unlawful for an employer to “exclude or to  
15 suspend an employee, or otherwise to discriminate against, any individual because of his race,  
16 color, religion, sex, or national origin.” 42 U.S.C. § 2000e-2(c)(1).  
17

18 28. Within this framework, Title VII requires an employer to reasonably accommodate an  
19 employee’s sincere religious observances and practices, unless such an accommodation would  
20 impose an undue hardship on the employer.  
21

22 29. Pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(j), “religion” in the employment context is defined as  
23 “all aspects of religious observance and practice, as well as belief.” In view of this broad definition  
24 by Congress, it cannot be said that any employer covered by Title VII may legally or  
25 constitutionally require an employee to belong to any “bona-fide” religious organization as a  
26 condition for receiving an accommodation.  
27  
28

1           30. Title VII protects the Plaintiffs and other CCSF employees' rights to request religious  
2 or medical accommodations as needed. The employer is required to evaluate the request and  
3 determine through an interactive process whether reasonable accommodations can occur and the  
4 employee must be provided a reasonable opportunity to submit such requests. "Reasonable  
5 accommodation" means a modification or adjustment to the workplace that enables the employee  
6 to perform the essential functions of the job held or desired. Such accommodation can be made  
7 herein by simply having Plaintiffs follow the same protocols that were followed at the height of  
8 the pandemic, when they were considered heroes for continuing to work. Doing so would not  
9 impose an undue hardship on any of the Defendants. Defendants have utterly failed to make  
10 reasonable accommodations for the Plaintiffs' religious accommodation requests. Given that  
11 employees could submit to daily health screenings, wearing masks, quarantining, and  
12 telecommuting for work, those requests for accommodation would not amount to an undue  
13 hardship on the Defendants. Those exact same accommodations were made and worked during the  
14 height of the pandemic in 2020 and 2021.

17           31. Plaintiffs' right to free exercise of religion cannot be conditioned on the Defendants'  
18 irrational mandates. As Christians who believe in the sanctity of life, they will not take vaccines  
19 derived from aborted fetal cell lines. All Defendants, in denying the Plaintiffs' exemptions, were  
20 doing so under color of law and also doing so in order to subject the Plaintiffs to ongoing coercion  
21 based on their religious beliefs, that is, they are being coerced into a choice between their religious  
22 convictions and continued employment. That coercion is harmful in and of itself and cannot be  
23 remedied after the fact and is a violation of their fundamental civil rights under the First  
24 Amendment and Title VII. Plaintiffs have been damaged as a result, and also seek equitable relief  
25 from these irrational mandates.

32. Plaintiffs herein seek declaratory and injunctive relief, mandating that Defendants stop their coercion based on the Plaintiffs' religious beliefs and to grant their religious accommodation requests. Plaintiffs further request the same relief for medical exemptions based on having had COVID-19 and its concomitant antibodies.

## SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION

**Violation of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (Cal. Govt. Code § 12900 *et seq.*) – Failure to Provide Religious Accommodation  
(Against All Named Defendants)**

33. Plaintiffs hereby incorporate and reallege the preceding paragraphs 1-32 as though fully set forth herein.

34. Under FEHA, it is an unlawful employment practice for an employer to discriminate against any employee or other covered person because of a conflict between the person's religious belief or observance and any employment requirement, unless the employer demonstrates that it has explored any available reasonable means of accommodating the religious belief or observance, including the possibilities of excusing the person from those duties that conflict with their belief and observance, or permitting those duties to be performed at another time or by another person.

35. Plaintiffs are persons and employees of Defendants within the meaning of FEHA.

36. Defendants were at all times relevant herein employers for purposes of FEHA.

37. Plaintiffs are able to perform the essential functions of their jobs with Defendants and have been doing so successfully and commendably for many years, including working during the height of the pandemic.

38. The mandates at issue make clear that accepting certain vaccines are suddenly a de facto expectation for their positions.

39. Plaintiffs have strong, sincerely held religious beliefs that taking the COVID-19 vaccines would be morally wrong for them. This is due to the fact that as Christians they have a

1 duty to uphold the sanctity of life and they want no part of vaccines that are derived from aborted  
2 fetal cell lines. The Defendants herein are attempting to coerce Plaintiffs into violating their faith  
3 by making them choose between their faith and continued employment. These acts by Defendants  
4 violate the Plaintiffs' fundamental rights under Article I of the California Constitution and FEHA.

5 40. Plaintiffs have notified their supervisors of the conflict and in fact requested  
6 accommodations.

7 41. Accommodation would permit Plaintiffs to continue performing their essential  
8 functions as they have been doing for many years.

9 42. "Reasonable accommodation" means a modification or adjustment to the  
10 workplace that enables the employee to perform the essential functions of the job held or desired.  
11 Defendants refused to explore available reasonable alternatives to the stated vaccine requirement  
12 or engage in any timely, interactive, meaningful, or good faith process with Plaintiffs to ascertain  
13 whether, in light of their extensive backgrounds and experience, they could in fact perform the  
14 essential functions of their positions without being vaccinated. That refusal to explore reasonable  
15 alternatives is based on the Defendants' goal to coerce the Plaintiffs into a choice between their  
16 religious convictions and continued employment. That coercion is ongoing and cannot be  
17 remedied after the fact. An accommodation can be made herein by simply having Plaintiffs follow  
18 the same protocols that were followed at the height of the pandemic, when they were considered  
19 heroes for continuing to work. Doing so would not impose an undue hardship on CCSF.

20 43. All Defendants, in denying the Plaintiffs' exemptions, were doing so under color of  
21 law. Plaintiffs have been damaged as a result and also seek equitable relief from these irrational  
22 mandates.

23 44. Defendants intentionally violated Plaintiffs' rights with malice and recklessness in  
24 violation of FEHA and Article I of the California Constitution. As a result of Defendants'  
25

1 discriminatory actions, Plaintiffs suffered harm and are entitled to recover damages including but  
2 not limited to mental suffering, past and future lost earnings and benefits, and other compensatory  
3 damages in an amount according to proof.

4 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

5 WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs respectfully pray this Court grants relief as follows:

6 1. A preliminary and permanent injunction requiring Defendants to accept all sincere  
7 requests for religious accommodations to taking the COVID-19 vaccinations;

8 2. A preliminary and permanent injunction requiring Defendants to accept all sincere  
9 requests for medical exemptions based on having COVID-19 antibodies acquired as a result of  
10 surviving a COVID-19 infection;

11 3. Plaintiffs request compensatory damages in an amount according to proof;

12 4. Plaintiffs request reasonable costs of suit and attorneys' fees; and

13 5. Plaintiffs request such other and further relief as the Court may deem appropriate.

14 Dated: March 4, 2022

15 /s/ Russell Davis

16 Russell Davis, Esq.

17 Kevin T. Snider, Esq.

18 PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

19 *Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiffs demand a jury trial on all causes of action and claims to which they have a right to a jury trial.

/s/ Russell Davis  
Russell Davis, Esq.  
Kevin T. Snider, Esq.  
PACIFIC JUSTICE INSTITUTE

*Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

## **VERIFICATION**

I, Selina Keene, am one of the Plaintiffs in the above-captioned matter. I have read the  
VERIFIED COMPLAINT and am familiar with same. The contents are true and accurate and  
known to me by personal knowledge, except for those matters which are stated on information and  
belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing is true and correct.

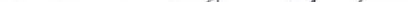
Executed this 7<sup>th</sup> Day of March 2022, in the County of Contra Costa, State of California.

Selina Keene  
Selina Keene, Plaintiff

## **VERIFICATION**

2 I, Mark McClure, am one of the Plaintiffs in the above-captioned matter. I have read the  
3 VERIFIED COMPLAINT and am familiar with same. The contents are true and accurate and  
4 known to me by personal knowledge, except for those matters which are stated on information and  
5 belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

6 I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the  
7 foregoing is true and correct.

8                   Executed this 30 Day of March 2022, in the County of San Mateo, State of  
9 California. 

  
Mark McClure, Plaintiff

## VERIFICATION

I, Melody Fountila, am one of the Plaintiffs in the above-captioned matter. I have read the  
VERIFIED COMPLAINT and am familiar with same. The contents are true and accurate and  
known to me by personal knowledge, except for those matters which are stated on information and  
belief, and as to those matters, I believe them to be true.

I declare under penalty of perjury, under the laws of the State of California, that the foregoing is true and correct.

Executed this 9 Day of March 2022, in the County of Contra Costa, State of California.

Melody Fountila  
Melody Fountila, Plaintiff

# **EXHIBIT 2**

**EXHIBIT 2**

11 SELINA KEENE, et al.,  
12 Plaintiffs,  
13 v.  
14 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN  
FRANCISCO, et al.,  
15 Defendants.

Case No. 22-cv-01587-JSW

**ORDER GRANTING MOTION TO  
DISMISS INDIVIDUAL DEFENDANTS  
AND DENYING MOTION FOR  
PRELIMINARY INJUNCTION**

Re: Dkt. Nos. 15, 19, 28

17 Now before the Court is the motion to dismiss claims against Defendants London Breed  
18 and Carol Isen as individuals sued in their official capacities and Plaintiffs' motion for a  
19 preliminary injunction. The Court has considered the parties' papers, relevant legal authority, and  
20 the record in this case, and HEREBY GRANTS Defendants' motion to dismiss the individual  
21 defendants sued in their official capacities and DENIES Plaintiffs' motion for a preliminary  
22 injunction.<sup>1</sup>

**BACKGROUND**

24 Selina Keene and Melody Fountila ("Plaintiffs"), City workers, filed this lawsuit against  
25 the City and County of San Francisco as well as Mayor London Breed and Carol Isen, as Director  
26 of Human Resources for the City and County of San Francisco ("City"), in their official capacities.  
27

28 <sup>1</sup> Plaintiffs' *ex parte* motion for shortened time is DENIED as moot. (Dkt. No. 28.)

1 In their complaint, Plaintiffs allege that on June 23, 2021, the City mandated that all 25,000 of its  
2 employees be vaccinated against COVID-19 by no later than November 1, 2021.

3 Plaintiffs contend that the vaccinations are derived from stem cells from aborted fetuses  
4 and are therefore in direct contravention of their deeply held religious beliefs. Based on these  
5 beliefs as well as their understanding that their naturally-acquired immunity was sufficiently  
6 strong, Plaintiffs refused to get vaccinated. Having failed to cooperate with the mandate, Plaintiffs  
7 have left their employment.

8 Plaintiffs contend that the vaccine mandate is arbitrary and unreasonably implemented.  
9 They further contend that the mandates “ignore peer-reviewed studies comparing naturally  
10 acquired and vaccine acquired immunity . . . [which] show that natural immunity provides  
11 equivalent or greater protection against severe infections from COVID-19 than immunity  
12 generated by mRNA vaccines.” (Complaint at ¶ 22.) Plaintiffs contend that that the vaccines are  
13 really only treatments for COVID-19 and are not effective in preventing infection, transmission, or  
14 reinfection of the virus.

15 Based on these allegations, Plaintiffs contend that the City’s mandatory vaccination  
16 program violates their rights under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which provides broad  
17 protections for people of religious beliefs. Plaintiffs allege that the City failed to accommodate the  
18 free exercise of their sincere religious observances and practices. Plaintiffs also allege that the  
19 mandatory vaccination program constitutes an unlawful employment practice under the California  
20 Fair Employment and Housing Act by failing to accommodate their religious beliefs or  
21 observances.

22 The Court will address additional facts as necessary in its analysis.

## 23 ANALYSIS

### 24 A. Motion to Dismiss Individual Defendants.

#### 25 1. Applicable Legal Standard.

26 A motion to dismiss is proper under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 12(b)(6) where the  
27 pleadings fail to state a claim upon which relief can be granted. A court’s “inquiry is limited to  
28 the allegations in the complaint, which are accepted as true and construed in the light most

1 favorable to the plaintiff.” *Lazy Y Ranch Ltd. v. Behrens*, 546 F.3d 580, 588 (9th Cir. 2008).

2 Even under the liberal pleading standard of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 8(a)(2), “a  
3 plaintiff’s obligation to provide ‘grounds’ of his ‘entitle[ment] to relief’ requires more than labels  
4 and conclusions, and formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.”  
5 *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 555 (citing *Papasan v. Allain*, 478 U.S. 265, 286 (1986)). Pursuant to  
6 *Twombly*, a plaintiff cannot merely allege conduct that is conceivable but must instead allege  
7 “enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face.” *Id.* at 570. “A claim has facial  
8 plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable  
9 inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged.” *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662,  
10 678 (2009) (citing *Twombly*, 550 U.S. at 556).

11 If the allegations are insufficient to state a claim, a court should grant leave to amend  
12 unless amendment would be futile. *See, e.g., Reddy v. Litton Indus., Inc.*, 912 F.2d 291, 296 (9th  
13 Cir. 1990); *Cook, Perkiss & Liehe, Inc. v. N. Cal. Collection Serv., Inc.*, 911 F.2d 242, 246-47 (9th  
14 Cir. 1990). “A pro se litigant must be given leave to amend his or her complaint unless it is  
15 absolutely clear that the deficiencies in the complaint could not be cured by amendment.” *Noll v.*  
16 *Carlson*, 809 F.2d 1446, 1448 (9th Cir. 1987), superseded on other grounds by statute as stated in  
17 *Lopez v. Smith*, 203 F.3d 1122, 1126-27 (9th Cir. 2000) (en banc). However, a court “is not  
18 required to accept legal conclusions cast in the form of factual allegations if those conclusions  
19 cannot reasonably be drawn from the facts alleged.” *Clegg v. Cult Awareness Network*, 18 F.3d  
20 752, 754-55 (9th Cir. 1994).

21 **2. Claims Against Individual Defendants Breed and Isen.**

22 In addition to naming the City and County of San Francisco as a defendant, Plaintiffs have  
23 also sued London Breed, Mayor of San Francisco, and Carol Isen, as Director of Human  
24 Resources for the City and County of San Francisco, in their official capacities. Defendants move  
25 to dismiss the named individual defendants sued in their official capacities, arguing that the  
26 addition of the individuals is unnecessary and duplicative of claims pending against the City and  
27 County.

28 Plaintiffs allege two claims against the individual officials for religious discrimination

1 under Title VII and the FEHA. To establish a cause of action for religious discrimination under  
2 either statute, Plaintiffs must demonstrate (1) “a bona fide religious belief, the practice of which  
3 conflicts with an employment duty,” (2) that plaintiffs “informed [their] employer of the belief and  
4 conflict”; and (3) “the employer discharged, threatened, or otherwise subjected [them] to an  
5 adverse employment action because of [their] inability to fulfill the job requirement.” *Berry v.*  
6 *De't of Soc. Servs.*, 447 F.3d 642, 655 (9th Cir. 2006) (quotation marks omitted); *see also Metoyer*  
7 *v. Chassman*, 504 F.3d 919, 941 (9th Cir. 2007) (“California courts apply the Title VII framework  
8 to claims brought under FEHA.”). In order to prevail on a claim for religious discrimination, a  
9 plaintiff must allege that an employer failed to accommodate a religious belief or practice and the  
10 plaintiff’s “need for an accommodation was a motivating factor in the employer’s decision.”  
11 *E.E.O.C. v. Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc.*, 575 U.S. 768, 772 & n.2 (2015).

12 In this matter, where Plaintiffs have sued the employer, here the City and County of San  
13 Francisco, the addition of the individual mayor and director of human resources is duplicative.  
14 *See Ames v. City of Novato*, No. 16-cv-02590-JST, 2016 WL 6024587, at \*4 (N.D. Cal. Oct. 14,  
15 2016) (collecting cases in which “courts have dismissed Title VII claims against individual  
16 employees sued in the official capacities as redundant where the employer is also named as a  
17 defendant.”). Where the plaintiff sues both the individual defendant in her official capacity and  
18 the entity itself, “the court may dismiss the officer as a redundant defendant” because “[a]n official  
19 capacity suit against a municipal officer is equivalent to a suit against the entity.” *Center for Bio-*  
20 *Ethical Reform, Inc. v. Los Angeles County Sheriff Dep't*, 533 F.3d 780, 799 (9th Cir. 2008)  
21 (citing *Kentucky v. Graham*, 473 U.S. 159, 165-66 (1985)).

22 Accordingly, the Court GRANTS the motion to dismiss the individual defendants Breed  
23 and Isen sued in their official capacities.

24 **B. Motion for Preliminary Injunction.**

25 **1. Legal Standard.**

26 Preliminary injunctive relief is an “extraordinary and drastic remedy” that is never awarded  
27 as of right. *Munaf v. Geren*, 553 U.S. 674, 689-690 (2008) (internal citations omitted). In order to  
28 obtain such relief, Plaintiff must establish: (1) she is likely to succeed on the merits; (2) she is

1 likely to suffer irreparable harm in the absence of preliminary relief; (3) the balance of equities  
2 tips in her favor; and (4) an injunction is in the public interest. *Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council,*  
3 *Inc.*, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008). In *Alliance for the Wild Rockies v. Cottrell*, the Ninth Circuit held that  
4 the “serious questions” sliding scale approach survives *Winter*. 632 F.3d 1127, 1134-35 (9th Cir.  
5 2011). Thus, a court may grant a request for a preliminary injunction if a plaintiff demonstrates  
6 that there are serious questions going to the merits and a hardship balance that tips sharply in their  
7 favor, if the other two elements of the *Winter* test are also met. *Id.* at 1132.

8 However, a plaintiff also must show that she is likely to suffer irreparable injury and that  
9 the injunction is in the public interest. *Id.* at 1135. “For the purposes of injunctive relief, ‘serious  
10 questions’ refers to questions which cannot be resolved one way or the other at the hearing on the  
11 injunction and as to which the court perceives a need to preserve the status quo lest one side  
12 prevent resolution of the questions or execution of any judgment by altering the status quo.”  
13 *Republic of the Philippines v. Marcos*, 862 F.2d 1355, 1362 (9th Cir. 1988).

14 Serious questions are “substantial, difficult and doubtful, as to make them a fair ground for  
15 litigation and thus for more deliberative investigation.” *Hamilton Watch Co. v. Benrus Watch Co.*,  
16 206 F.2d 738, 740 (2d Cir. 1952). Serious questions need not promise a certainty of success, nor  
17 even present a probability of success, but must involve a “fair chance of success on the merits.”  
18 *Nat'l Wildlife Fed'n v. Coston*, 773 F.2d 1513, 1517 (9th Cir. 1985).

19 **3. Plaintiffs Have Not Established That They Are Likely to Prevail on the Merits.**

20 Plaintiffs have sued the City and County of San Francisco for the institution and  
21 application of a vaccine mandate as a condition of their continued employment. In the complaint  
22 and in conjunction with their motion for preliminary injunction, Plaintiffs contend that the vaccine  
23 is a mere treatment, and a not so effective one at that. Plaintiffs also allege that the vaccine “is  
24 derived from murdered children” and therefore violates their Christian beliefs. (Dkt. No. 19-3,  
25 Declaration of Selina Keene, ¶ 8.) Plaintiffs also assert that they have natural immunity derived  
26 from having had COVID-19 previously.

27 Contrary to Plaintiffs’ unfounded assertions, the California Department of Public Health  
28 has determined that unvaccinated people are considerably more likely to get and pass along

1 COVID-19 than fully-vaccinated people. (Request for Judicial Notice, Ex. E.) In addition,  
2 unvaccinated people are more likely to be hospitalized and more likely to die if they contract the  
3 disease. And “because vaccinated individual are less likely to become infected in the first place  
4 and also experience accelerated viral clearance, … [they] are less likely to infect others.” *Plata v.*  
5 *Newson*, No. 01-cv-01351-JST, 2021 WL 5410608, at \*2 (N.D. Cal. Nov. 17, 2021).

6 Not only do the assertions by Plaintiffs fly in the face of scientific consensus, their claims  
7 fail to recognize well-settled law allowing for compulsory vaccination as a condition for  
8 employment. *See, e.g., Jacobson v. Massachusetts*, 197 U.S. 11, 39 (1905). Neither Plaintiff has  
9 demonstrated that their religious beliefs are sincere or that those beliefs conflict with receiving the  
10 COVID-19 vaccine. There are no grounds upon which to assert the mistaken conclusion that the  
11 FDA-approved vaccines contain fetal cells or are otherwise derived from murdered babies. (*See,*  
12 *e.g.*, Request for Judicial Notice, Ex. G.) Feeling passionately about something or having a  
13 specific personal preference does not merit the status of a sincere religious belief. *See Wisconsin*  
14 *v. Yoder*, 496 U.S. 205, 215 (1972) (“[B]elief that is philosophical and personal rather than  
15 religious does not rise to the demands of the Religion Clause.”). Personal preferences are not  
16 beliefs protected by Title VII or FEHA. Accordingly, Plaintiffs have not established that they are  
17 likely to prevail on the merits of their claims.

18 **4. Plaintiffs Have Not Demonstrated Irreparable Harm.**

19 Plaintiffs argue that they will face irreparable harm absent an injunction of the application  
20 of the vaccination mandate because they have been forced to choose between maintaining their  
21 employment or taking a vaccine that they do not want. The majority of courts who have  
22 considered this issue have concluded that such a choice does not constitute irreparable harm. *See*  
23 *Plata*, 2021 WL 5410608, at \*3 (collecting cases upholding vaccine mandates). It is well-settled  
24 law that loss of employment does not constitute irreparable harm for purposes of an injunction.  
25 *See id.*

26 **5. Balance of Equities and Public Interest Weighs in Favor of Denial.**

27 Even if Plaintiffs had made a showing of likelihood of success on the merits or  
28 demonstrated that they suffer irreparable harm, the Court finds that the balance of hardships and

1 the public interest weigh sharply in favor of denial of an injunction. The public interest in  
2 preventing the spread of COVID-19 strongly favors increased vaccination rates as mandated by  
3 the City and County of San Francisco. Moreover, “[i]f . . . the impact of an injunction reaches  
4 beyond the parties, carrying with it a potential for public consequences, the public interest will be  
5 relevant to whether the district court grants the injunction.” *Stormans, Inc. v. Selecky*, 586 F.3d  
6 1109, 1139 (9th Cir. 2009). Even considering the specific harm of the individual plaintiffs in this  
7 matter who were compelled to retire early, “when balancing that harm against the legitimate and  
8 critical public interest in preventing the spread of COVID-19 by increasing the vaccination rate  
9 . . . the Court finds the balance weighs in favor of the broader public interests.” *Mass. Corr.*  
10 *Officers Federated Union v. Baker*, 567 F. Supp. 3d 315, 327 (D. Mass. 2021).

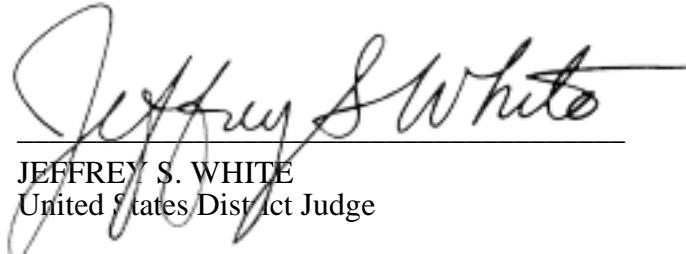
11 **CONCLUSION**

12 For the foregoing reasons, the Court GRANTS Defendants’ motion to dismiss the  
13 individuals in their official capacities and DENIES Plaintiffs’ motion for a preliminary injunction.

14 The Court HEREBY SETS an initial case management conference for November 4, 2022  
15 at 11:00 a.m. The parties shall submit a joint case management statement no later than October  
16 28, 2022.

17 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

18 Dated: September 23, 2022

19  
20  
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23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
  
JEFFREY S. WHITE  
United States District Judge

# **EXHIBIT 3**

**EXHIBIT 3**

1 Arkady Itkin (SBN 253194)  
2 Law Office of A. Itkin  
3 57 Post Street, Suite 812  
4 San Francisco, CA 94104  
5 Telephone: (415) 640-6765  
6 Fax: (415) 508-3474  
7 [arkady@arkadylaw.com](mailto:arkady@arkadylaw.com)

8 Attorney for Plaintiff,  
9 DAVID GOZUM

10 ELECTRONICALLY  
11 **FILED**  
12 *Superior Court of California,  
13 County of San Francisco*  
14 **05/26/2022**  
15 **Clerk of the Court**  
16 **BY: KAREN VALDES**  
17 **Deputy Clerk**

18 SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA

19 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO - UNLIMITED CIVIL JURISDICTION

20 DAVID GOZUM, ) CASE NO.: CGC-22-599306  
21 )  
22 Plaintiff, ) FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT FOR  
23 ) DAMAGES AND REQUEST FOR JURY  
24 ) TRIAL AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF  
25 )  
26 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN ) 1. FAILURE TO PROVIDE  
27 FRANCISCO HUMAN SERVICES ) REASONABLE RELIGIOUS  
28 AGENCY, AND DOES 1 TO 100, ) ACCOMMODATIONS AND  
29 ) TERMINATION IN VIOLATION OF  
30 ) FEHA  
31 )  
32 Defendants ) 2. VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE  
33 ) CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 FOR  
34 ) FAILURE TO ACCOMMODATE ON  
35 ) THE BASIS OF RELIGION

36  
37  
38 COMES NOW PLAINTIFF GOZUM and complains and alleges as follows:

39 **NATURE OF THE ACTION**

40 1. This is an individual action brought by an employee against his former employer City  
41 and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency. Plaintiff David Gozum (hereinafter  
42 "Plaintiff") alleges violations of the Fair Employment and Housing Act (hereinafter "FEHA") and  
43

1 violations of Title VII, based upon the Defendants' failure to accommodate his religion by refusing  
2 to grant exemption from the Covid-19 vaccination mandate and terminate his employment as a  
3 result.

4 **PARTIES**

5 2. Plaintiff is and at all material times alleged herein, was a resident of County of San  
6 Francisco.

7 3. At all material times alleged herein, Plaintiff was employed by Defendant the City  
8 and County of San Francisco Human Services Agency.

9 4. In addition to the Defendant named above, Plaintiff sues fictitiously Defendants  
10 DOES 1 through 100, pursuant to Code of Civil Procedure §474, because their names, capacities,  
11 status, or facts showing them to liable are not presently known. Plaintiff will amend this complaint  
12 to show their true names and capacities, together with appropriate charging language, when such  
13 information has been ascertained.

14 **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

15 5. The acts of Defendants that form the basis for the causes of action in this complaint  
16 occurred in the County of San Francisco. Therefore, the San Francisco venue is proper.

17 **EXHAUSTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE REMEDIES**

18 6. Plaintiff timely obtained a Right to Sue letter from the Department of Fair Employment  
19 and Housing (hereinafter "DFEH"), a true and correct copy of which is attached hereto as Exhibit A.

21 **FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS**

22 7. Plaintiff started working for the Defendants around August 9, 2010 as a 2910 Social  
23 Worker with IHSS program. Plaintiff was promoted to his most recent position of Employment  
24 Training Specialist IV around March 2013.

25 8. Around August 11, 2021, Plaintiff submitted the City's vaccine declination form and  
26 submitted his request for religious accommodation to be exempted from the Defendants' Covid-19

27

28

1 vaccine mandate based on his religious beliefs. Plaintiff submitted a number of documents  
2 supporting his request, which reflected a history of his religious practice. The Defendants denied  
3 Plaintiff's request for an accommodation due to "insufficient documentation".

4 9. Plaintiff was working remotely since May 26, 2020. Plaintiff was foreseeable going to  
5 continue working remotely indefinitely due to the nature of his assignment.

6 10. Around November 1, 2021, Plaintiff was notified that he will not be able to continue  
7 working remotely due to vaccine mandate and he was placed on paid administrative leave.

8 11. On November 9, 2021, Plaintiff provided seven additional documents supporting his  
9 request for exemption from the vaccination requirements. Those documents reflected Plaintiff's  
10 extensive background and involvement in religious studies.

11 12. On November 12, 2021, Plaintiff provided a signed letter from Rev. Pastor Alois  
12 Ramos of Faith Bible Church of San Francisco to further show proof of his religious beliefs.

13 13. Plaintiff was officially dismissed from his employment with the Defendants on April  
14 1, 2022.

15  
16 **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**  
17 **FAILURE TO PROVIDE REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS OF FEHA**

18 14. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 13, as though fully set  
19 forth herein.

20 15. At all times material to this complaint, Plaintiff was a person who held a sincerely  
21 religious belief within the meaning of FEHA.

22 16. Defendant is an employer within the meaning of the FEHA.

23 17. On information and belief, Plaintiff alleges that, during times material here,  
24 the Defendant violated the FEHA by failing to provide reasonable accommodations to Plaintiff's  
25 religious beliefs and by denying his request to be exempt from the Covid-19 vaccine mandate.

26 18. The effect of the above actions and omissions have been to deprive Plaintiff of equal  
27

1 employment opportunities and otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee because of his  
2 disability.

3 19. As a direct and further proximate result of the above violations of her rights under the  
4 FEHA, Plaintiff has suffered compensatory damages in the form of past and future wage loss, and  
5 emotional distress.

6 20. As a result of Defendant's unlawful acts, Plaintiff is entitled to compensatory  
7 damages, equitable relief, and attorney's fees and costs.

8 **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

9 **VIOLATION OF TITLE VII OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964 FOR FAILURE TO  
ACCOMMODATE ON THE BASIS OF RELIGION**

10 21. Plaintiff hereby incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 20, as though fully set  
11 forth herein.

12 22. Title VII forbids an employer from refusing a job to someone because of his need for  
13 religious accommodation absent proof that granting the accommodation would cause it undue  
14 hardship. 42 USC §§ 2000e(j), 2000e-2(a)(1); EEOC v Abercrombie & Fitch Stores, Inc., 575 US  
15 768, 774 (2015).

16 23. The Defendants denied Plaintiff's request for religious accommodation, providing  
17 which would not have imposed an undue hardship on the Defendants. Further, the Defendants did  
18 not propose any alternative reasonable accommodations to Plaintiff.

19 24. As a result of the Defendants' violations, Plaintiff suffered lost income and other  
20 economic and non-economic damages.

21 **PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

22 **WHEREFORE**, Plaintiff prays for judgment against the Defendants as follows:

23 1. For compensatory damages;

2. For equitable relief, including but not limited to full reinstatement with full backpay;
3. For statutory attorneys' fees and costs of suit, for any applicable interest;
4. For injunctive relief as no plain, adequate, or complete remedy at law is available to Plaintiff to redress the wrongs addressed herein;
5. For judicial declaration of the rights and duties of the respective parties; and
4. For such other and further relief as is just and proper.

11

8 | DATED: May 26, 2022

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,

BY: Arkady Itkin  
Arkady Itkin  
Attorney for Plaintiff,  
DAVID GOZUM

**DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL**

Plaintiff hereby demands a trial for each and every claim for which she has a right to a jury trial.

DATED: May 26, 2022

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED.

BY: MMU -  
Arkady Itkin  
Attorney for Plaintiff,  
DAVID GOZUM

# **EXHIBIT A**



STATE OF CALIFORNIA | Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

**DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING**

2218 K Kaiser Drive, Suite 100 | Elk Grove | CA | 95758  
(800) 884-1884 (Voice) | (800) 700-2320 (TTY) | California's Relay Service at 711  
<http://www.dfeh.ca.gov> | Email: [contact.center@dfeh.ca.gov](mailto:contact.center@dfeh.ca.gov)

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

KEVIN KISH, DIRECTOR

March 18, 2022

David Gozum

**RE: Notice of Case Closure and Right to Sue**

DFEH Matter Number: 202203-16452118

Right to Sue: Gozum / City and County of San Francisco; Human Services Agency.

Dear David Gozum:

This letter informs you that the above-referenced complaint filed with the Department of Fair Employment and Housing (DFEH) has been closed effective March 18, 2022 because an immediate Right to Sue notice was requested.

This letter is also your Right to Sue notice. According to Government Code section 12965, subdivision (b), a civil action may be brought under the provisions of the Fair Employment and Housing Act against the person, employer, labor organization or employment agency named in the above-referenced complaint. The civil action must be filed within one year from the date of this letter.

This matter may qualify for DFEH's Small Employer Family Leave Mediation Pilot Program. Under this program, established under Government Code section 12945.21, a small employer with 5 -19 employees, charged with violation of the California Family Rights Act, Government Code section 12945.2, has the right to participate in DFEH's free mediation program. Under this program both the employee requesting an immediate right to sue and the employer charged with the violation may request that all parties participate in DFEH's free mediation program. The employee is required to contact the Department's Dispute Resolution Division prior to filing a civil action and must also indicate whether they are requesting mediation. The employee is prohibited from filing a civil action unless the Department does not initiate mediation within the time period specified in section 12945.21, subdivision (b) (4), or until the mediation is complete or is unsuccessful. The employee's statute of limitations to file a civil action, including for all related claims not arising under section 12945.2, is tolled from the date the employee contacts the Department regarding the intent to pursue legal action until the mediation is complete or is unsuccessful. Contact DFEH's Small Employer Family Leave Mediation Pilot Program by emailing [DRDOnlinerequests@dfeh.ca.gov](mailto:DRDOnlinerequests@dfeh.ca.gov) and include the DFEH matter number indicated on the Right to Sue notice.



STATE OF CALIFORNIA | Business, Consumer Services and Housing Agency

GAVIN NEWSOM, GOVERNOR

KEVIN KISH, DIRECTOR

**DEPARTMENT OF FAIR EMPLOYMENT & HOUSING**

2218 Kausen Drive, Suite 100 | Elk Grove | CA | 95758  
(800) 884-1684 (Voice) | (800) 700-2320 (TTY) | California's Relay Service at 711  
<http://www.dfeh.ca.gov> | Email: [contact.center@dfeh.ca.gov](mailto:contact.center@dfeh.ca.gov)

To obtain a federal Right to Sue notice, you must contact the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to file a complaint within 30 days of receipt of this DFEH Notice of Case Closure or within 300 days of the alleged discriminatory act, whichever is earlier.

Sincerely,

Department of Fair Employment and Housing

**PROOF OF SERVICE BY MAIL**

I am a citizen of the United States and employed in San Francisco County, California. I am over the age of eighteen years and not a party to the within-entitled action. My business address is 57 Post Street, Suite 812, San Francisco, CA 94104. I am readily familiar with this firm's practice for collection and processing of correspondence for mailing with the United States Postal Service. On June 6, 2022, I placed with this firm at the above address for deposit with the United States Postal Service a true and correct copy of the within document(s):

## PLAINTIFF'S FIRST AMENDED COMPLAINT

in a sealed envelope, postage fully paid, addressed as follows:

Amy Super  
City Attorney's Office  
1390 Market Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102-5408  
[amy.super@sfcityatty.org](mailto:amy.super@sfcityatty.org)

Following ordinary business practices, the envelope was sealed and placed for collection and mailing on this date, and would, in the ordinary course of business, be deposited with the United States Postal Service on this date.

I declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the State of California that the above is true and correct.

Executed on June 6, 2022, at San Francisco, California.

ARKADY ITKIN

# **EXHIBIT 4**

**EXHIBIT 4**

1 DAVID CHIU, State Bar #189542  
2 City Attorney  
3 JONATHAN C. ROLNICK, State Bar #151814  
4 Chief Labor Attorney  
5 AMY SUPER, State Bar #274617  
6 Deputy City Attorney  
Fox Plaza  
1390 Market Street, 5th Floor  
San Francisco, California 94102-5408  
Telephone: (415) 554-3931  
E-Mail: amy.super@sfcityatty.org

7 Attorneys for Defendant  
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

8

9

10 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

11 NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

12 DAVID GOZUM,

Case No.

13 Plaintiff,

**NOTICE OF REMOVAL OF ACTION  
PURSUANT TO 28 U.S.C. §§ 1441 AND 1446**

14 vs.

Date Action filed: April 22, 2022

15 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO  
16 HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY, AND DOES  
1 TO 100,

17 Defendants.

18

19

20 **TO THE CLERK OF THE DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF**

21 **CALIFORNIA AND TO PLAINTIFF DAVID GOZUM AND HIS ATTORNEY OF RECORD:**

22 NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Defendant City and County of San Francisco

23 (“Defendant”) in the captioned action, San Francisco Superior Court Case No. CGC 22-599306,  
24 hereby files in the United States District Court for the Northern District of California, a Notice of  
25 Removal of said action to said United States District Court, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1441, and are  
26 filing in said Superior Court a Notice of Removal.

## STATE COURT ACTION

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1441, Defendant presents the following facts to the Judges of the United States Court for the Northern District of California:

On or about June 6, 2022, Plaintiff David Gozum filed a First Amended Complaint. A copy of the First Amended Complaint (“First Amended Complaint”) filed in the San Francisco Superior Court was served on Defendant City and County of San Francisco on or about June 6, 2022. The First Amended Complaint alleges claims arising under Title VII 42 U.S.C. Section 2000e, et seq. A true and correct copy of the First Amended Complaint received by Defendant is attached as **Exhibit A**.

On July 6, 2022, Defendant City and County of San Francisco filed its Answer to Plaintiff's First Amended Complaint for Damages in Superior Court of California, in and for the City and County of San Francisco, Action No. CGC CGC-22-599305. A copy of the Answer was filed and served on Plaintiff on or about July 6, 2022. A true and correct copy of the Answer served on Plaintiff is attached as **Exhibit B**.

The above represents the only pleadings, processes and orders on file with the Superior Court to the knowledge of the undersigned, as required by 28 U.S.C. §1441. The above also represents a true and accurate description of the status of the Superior Court action.

## JURISDICTION

Where a defendant is sued in a state court for alleged federal civil rights violations, the defendant has the option of defending in the state court or removing the proceeding to federal court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1441(b). Section 1441(b) provides in relevant part:

[a]ny civil action of which the district courts have original jurisdiction founded on a claim or right arising under the Constitution, treaties or laws of the United States shall be removable without regard to the citizenship or residence of the parties.

Section 1441(a) states that the proper venue upon removal is to the district court “for the district and division embracing the place where such state action is pending.” 28 U.S.C. §1441(a). Section 1446(b) provides that the notice of removal “may be filed within thirty days after receipt by defendant . . . of a copy of an amended pleading, motion . . . or other paper from which it may first be ascertained that the case is one which is or has become removable. . . .” 28 U.S.C. § 1446(b).

The above-described Complaint presents a civil action of which this court has original jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. §1331, in that Plaintiff's sixth cause of action alleges violation of 42 U.S.C. §1983, over which this Court has original jurisdiction. Defendant files this Notice within 30 days after Defendant's receipt of service of the Complaint, which is the first pleading from which it can be ascertained that this action is removable, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1441(a) and 1446(b).

WHEREFORE, Defendant prays that the above action now pending in the Superior Court of the State of California in and for the City and County of San Francisco be removed in its entirety to this Court for all further proceedings, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1441, *et. seq.*

Dated: July 6, 2022

DAVID CHIU  
City Attorney  
JONATHAN C. ROLNICK  
Chief Labor Attorney  
AMY D. SUPER  
Deputy City Attorneys

By:/a/Amy D. Super  
AMY D. SUPER  
Attorneys for Defendant  
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

# **EXHIBIT 5**

EXHIBIT 5

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2 *Counsel of Record*  
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9 Emily C. Mimnaugh, NV State Bar No. 15287 *pro hac vice*  
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14 Email: [emimnaugh@pji.org](mailto:emimnaugh@pji.org)

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19 Tel. (949) 481-9664  
20 Email: [info@bisbeelawgroup.com](mailto:info@bisbeelawgroup.com)

21 *Attorneys for Plaintiffs*

22 **IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
23 FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

24 JOSE GUARDADO, MELISSA ) Case No.:  
25 BORZONI, ANDREW MALONEY, )  
26 ROMMEL TAYLOR, PENNI )  
27 EIGSTER, TARA AMADO, and ) **COMPLAINT FOR DAMAGES,**  
themselves and all other similarly ) **DECLARATORY AND**  
situated persons, ) **INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**  
Plaintiffs, ) CLASS ACTION

v. )  
v. )  
v. )  
v. )

1 CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN )  
 2 FRANCISCO, and DOES 1-100, )  
 3 Defendants. )  
 \_\_\_\_\_

4 **INTRODUCTION**

5 1. This is a complaint for employment discrimination brought as a class  
 6 action by employees holding religious convictions against the SARS-CoV-2  
 7 (COVID-19) vaccine. Casting aside the presumption of sincerity of faith, a  
 8 government employer has zealously hunted for heretics and hypocrites among its  
 9 workforce. Of the approximately 1,000 employees seeking a religious  
 10 accommodation, only a small fraction were deemed true believers.

11 2. The City and County of San Francisco (San Francisco) ordered all of  
 12 its employees to submit to vaccination for COVID-19. Pursuant to federal and  
 13 state law, San Francisco as an employer must allow employees to submit requests  
 14 for religious accommodation when compliance with a work requirement would  
 15 violate religious beliefs. Absent an actual undue hardship on San Francisco, the  
 16 requests for accommodation must be granted. Approximately 1,000 employees  
 17 submitted requests for religious accommodation. But while these employees acted  
 18 in good faith, San Francisco did not. Instead, San Francisco conducted a religious  
 19 inquisition to determine which employees were true believers. According to San  
 20 Francisco, only 51 employees requesting religious accommodation hold a sincere  
 21 faith; for those who survived its religious wringer, the “accommodation” provided  
 22 was placement on a 60-day citywide job search. What is more, San Francisco  
 23 claims that accommodation constitutes an undue hardship because an unvaccinated  
 24 employee poses a danger to themselves, co-workers, and the public. As a result,  
 25 nearly all 1,000 religious objectors have either been fired or are in the process of  
 26 San Francisco terminating their employment.

## **JURISDICTION AND VENUE**

3. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331, as it arises under the Constitution and laws of the United States, and presents a federal question, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1343(a)(3)-(4). The Court also has jurisdiction under 42 U.S.C. § 2000-e5(f)(3). Venue is proper within this judicial district and division, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391(b), because the relevant events have occurred and are threatened to occur in this jurisdictional district and division. The Defendant's principal place of business is in this district.

4. Plaintiffs' claims for declaratory and injunctive relief are authorized by 28 U.S.C. §§ 2201-02, Federal Rules of Civil Procedure 57 and 65, and the general legal and equitable powers of this Court, which empower this Court to grant the requested relief.

## **PARTIES**

## Plaintiffs

5. Plaintiff, JOSE GUARDADO, was employed by the CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as an Architectural Associate II. GUARDADO has sincerely held religious beliefs that prevent him from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine without violating his faith. GUARDADO submitted a written request for a religious accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair Employment and Housing Act. GUARDADO utilized San Francisco's form entitled *Employee Request for Religious Accommodation (COVID-19 Exemption)*. A true and correct copy of his request, along with the combined requests of the other Plaintiffs, accompanies this Complaint, is incorporated in full, and marked as Exhibit 1. His beliefs are sincerely held. San Francisco deemed his claim of faith to be insincere and denied his request for a religious accommodation via its standardized form entitled *Reasonable Accommodation Determination (COVID-19 Vaccination Exemption)*. On the form, the box **DENIED** was checked. A true and correct copy

1 of the denial, combined with those of the other Plaintiffs, accompanies this  
2 Complaint, is incorporated in full, and marked as Exhibit 2. In addition, San  
3 Francisco speculated that an accommodation would be an undue hardship based on  
4 the claim that an unvaccinated employee presents a danger to himself, co-workers,  
5 and the public, although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and  
6 spread COVID-19. GUARDADO was thus fired. GUARDADO has exhausted  
7 administrative remedies and has received a notice of right to sue from the Equal  
8 Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). A true and correct copy of the  
9 notice from the EEOC right to sue letter, along with those of the other Plaintiffs,  
10 accompanies this Complaint, is incorporated in full, and marked as Exhibit 3.  
11 GUARDADO sues on behalf of himself and on behalf of others similarly situated.  
12 GUARDADO is the Plaintiff Class representative.

13 6. Plaintiff, MELISSA BORZONI, was employed by the CITY AND  
14 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as a Senior Community Development Specialist  
15 I. BORZONI has sincerely held religious beliefs that prevent her from receiving  
16 the COVID-19 vaccine without violating her faith. BORZONI submitted a written  
17 request for a religious accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair  
18 Employment and Housing Act. *See* Exhibit 1. Her beliefs are sincerely held. San  
19 Francisco denied her request for a religious accommodation. *See* Exhibit 2. In  
20 addition, San Francisco speculated that an accommodation would be an undue  
21 hardship based on the claim that an unvaccinated employee presents a danger to  
22 herself, co-workers, and the public, although fully vaccinated employees continued  
23 to contract and spread COVID-19. BORZONI was thus fired. BORZONI has  
24 exhausted administrative remedies and has received a notice of right to sue from  
25 the EEOC. *See* Exhibit 3. BORZONI sues on behalf of herself and on behalf of  
26 others similarly situated. BORZONI is a first alternate Plaintiff Class  
27 representative.

1       7. Plaintiff, ANDREW MALONEY, was employed by the CITY AND  
 2 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as an Architect. MALONEY has sincerely held  
 3 religious beliefs that prevent him from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine without  
 4 violating his faith. MALONEY submitted a written request for a religious  
 5 accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair Employment and Housing  
 6 Act. *See Exhibit 1.* His beliefs are sincerely held. San Francisco denied his  
 7 request for a religious accommodation. *See Exhibit 2.* In addition, San Francisco  
 8 speculated that an accommodation would be an undue hardship based on the claim  
 9 that an unvaccinated employee presents a danger to himself, co-workers, and the  
 10 public, although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and spread  
 11 COVID-19. MALONEY was thus fired. MALONEY has exhausted  
 12 administrative remedies and has received a notice of right to sue from the EEOC.  
 13 *See Exhibit 3.* MALONEY sues on behalf of himself and on behalf of others  
 14 similarly situated. MALONEY is a second alternate Plaintiff Class representative.

15       8. Plaintiff, ROMMEL TAYLOR, was employed by the CITY AND  
 16 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as a Senior Community Development Specialist  
 17 II. TAYLOR has sincerely held religious beliefs that prevent him from receiving  
 18 the COVID-19 vaccine without violating his faith. TAYLOR submitted a written  
 19 request for a religious accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair  
 20 Employment and Housing Act. *See Exhibit 1.* His beliefs are sincerely held. San  
 21 Francisco deemed his claim of faith to be insincere and denied his request for a  
 22 religious accommodation. *See Exhibit 2.* In addition, San Francisco speculated  
 23 that an accommodation would be an undue hardship based on the claim that an  
 24 unvaccinated employee presents a danger to himself, co-workers, and the public,  
 25 although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and spread COVID-19.  
 26 TAYLOR was thus fired. TAYLOR has exhausted administrative remedies and  
 27 has received a notice of right to sue from the EEOC. *See Exhibit 3.* TAYLOR

1 sues on behalf of himself and on behalf of others similarly situated. TAYLOR is a  
2 third alternate Plaintiff Class representative.

3 9. Plaintiff, PENNI EIGSTER, was employed by the CITY AND  
4 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as a Manager I. EIGSTER has sincerely held  
5 religious beliefs that prevent her from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine without  
6 violating her faith. EIGSTER submitted a written request for a religious  
7 accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair Employment and Housing  
8 Act. *See Exhibit 1.* Her beliefs are sincerely held. San Francisco deemed her  
9 claim of faith to be insincere and denied her request for a religious  
10 accommodation. *See Exhibit 2.* In addition, San Francisco speculated that an  
11 accommodation would be an undue hardship based on the claim that an  
12 unvaccinated employee presents a danger to herself, co-workers, and the public,  
13 although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and spread COVID-19.  
14 EIGSTER was thus fired. EIGSTER has exhausted administrative remedies and  
15 has received a notice of right to from the EEOC. *See Exhibit 3.* EIGSTER sues on  
16 behalf of herself, and on behalf of others similarly situated. EIGSTER is a fourth  
17 alternate Plaintiff Class representative.

18 10. Plaintiff, TARA AMADO, was employed by the CITY AND  
19 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as a Transit Operator. AMADO has sincerely  
20 held religious beliefs that prevent her from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine  
21 without violating her faith. AMADO submitted a written request for a religious  
22 accommodation under Title VII and the California Fair Employment and Housing  
23 Act. *See Exhibit 1.* Her beliefs are sincerely held. San Francisco denied her  
24 request for a religious accommodation. *See Exhibit 2.* In addition, San Francisco  
25 speculated that an accommodation would be an undue hardship based on the claim  
26 that an unvaccinated employee presents a danger to herself, co-workers, and the  
27 public, although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and spread

1 COVID-19. AMADO was thus fired. AMADO has exhausted administrative  
 2 remedies and has received a notice of right to from the EEOC. *See* Exhibit 3.  
 3 AMADO sues on behalf of herself, and on behalf of others similarly situated.  
 4 AMADO is a fifth alternate Plaintiff Class representative.

5 11. Plaintiff, DANIELLE BOLOGNA, was employed by the CITY AND  
 6 COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO as a Public Service Aid – Associate to  
 7 Professionals. BOLOGNA has sincerely held religious beliefs that prevent her  
 8 from receiving the COVID-19 vaccine without violating her faith. BOLOGNA  
 9 submitted a written request for a religious accommodation under Title VII and the  
 10 California Fair Employment and Housing Act. *See* Exhibit 1. Her beliefs are  
 11 sincerely held. San Francisco deemed her claim of faith to be insincere and denied  
 12 her request for a religious accommodation. *See* Exhibit 2. In addition, San  
 13 Francisco speculated that an accommodation would be an undue hardship based on  
 14 the claim that an unvaccinated employee presents a danger to herself, co-workers,  
 15 and the public, although fully vaccinated employees continued to contract and  
 16 spread COVID-19. BOLOGNA was thus fired. BOLOGNA has exhausted  
 17 administrative remedies and has received a notice of right to from the EEOC. *See*  
 18 Exhibit 3. BOLOGNA sues on behalf of herself, and on behalf of others similarly  
 19 situated. BOLOGNA is a sixth alternate Plaintiff Class representative.

20 **Defendants**

21 12. Defendant, CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO, is  
 22 established as a consolidated charter county and city pursuant to the California  
 23 Constitution art. XI, § 6. It is an *employer* as defined by 42 U.S.C. § 2000e(b) and  
 24 Cal. Gov. Code § 12926(d) and employs or has employed the named Plaintiffs in  
 25 the above-captioned case as well as members of the Plaintiff Class.

26 13. The true names and capacities, whether individual, corporate,  
 27 associate, or otherwise, of DOES 1-100, inclusive, are unknown to Plaintiffs at this

1 time, who therefore sues said Defendants by such fictitious names. Plaintiffs are  
 2 informed and believe and thereon allege that each of the fictitiously named  
 3 Defendants is in some way responsible for, or participated in or contributed to, the  
 4 matters and things complained of herein, and is legally responsible in some  
 5 manner. Plaintiffs will seek leave to amend this Complaint when the true names,  
 6 capacities, and responsibilities have been ascertained.

7 **CLASS ACTION ALLEGATIONS**

8 14. Plaintiffs, JOSE GUARDADO, MELISSA BORZONI, ANDREW  
 9 MALONEY, ROMMEL TAYLOR, PENNI EIGSTER, TARA AMADO and  
 10 DANIELLE BOLOGNA (each a Plaintiff and, together, the named Plaintiffs),  
 11 bring this action for a class of persons defined as follows: All employees presently  
 12 or previously employed by San Francisco (1) who have been ordered to submit to a  
 13 COVID-19 vaccination, (2) who have submitted a written request for a religious  
 14 accommodation, and (3) whose requests were denied due to a finding of a lack of  
 15 religious sincerity and/or due to the claim that granting a religious accommodation  
 16 would pose an undue hardship on San Francisco.

17 15. These persons are collectively referred to as the Plaintiff Class.

18 16. The proposed Plaintiff Class satisfies the numerosity, commonality,  
 19 typicality, and adequacy prerequisites for suing as a representative party under  
 20 Rule 23 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure.

21 A. **Numerosity:** The proposed Plaintiff Class is comprised of  
 22 approximately 1,000 current or former employees of San Francisco.

23 B. **Commonality:** There are questions of law and fact common to each  
 24 member of the proposed Plaintiff Class, to wit:

25 (1) Whether the universal denial of *religious* accommodation to  
 26 the unvaccinated based on the claim that the unvaccinated  
 27 employee poses a danger to the employee, co-workers, and the

public is lawful under federal and state employment laws when the employer simultaneously allows *secular* accommodations for the unvaccinated;

- (2) Whether San Francisco's standardized process of inquiring into the sincerity of the faith of any employee who requests religious accommodation is consistent with federal employment laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—42 U.S.C. § 2000e, et seq. (Title VII), and state employment laws, including the California Fair Employment and Housing Act—Cal. Gov. Code § 12900, et seq. (FEHA); and
- (3) Whether San Francisco's standardized process of inquiring into the sincerity of the faith of any employee who requests religious accommodation is consistent with the religion clauses enumerated in the First Amendment.

C. **Typicality:** The named Plaintiffs' claims are typical of the Plaintiff Class in that (1) all named Plaintiffs hold religious beliefs that compel them not to receive the COVID-19 vaccine; (2) they have claimed sincerity of their religious beliefs; (3) they have submitted written requests for religious accommodation; and (4) their requests have been denied.

**D. Adequacy of Representation:** The named Plaintiffs will fairly and adequately protect the interests of the proposed Plaintiff Class. The interests of the named Plaintiffs do not conflict with the interests of the Plaintiff Class members, and the named Plaintiffs have retained counsel experienced in successful class action litigation and constitutional litigation in order to vigorously prosecute this action

1 on behalf of the Plaintiff Class. The relief sought by the named  
2 Plaintiffs will inure to the benefit of the Plaintiff Class generally.

3 E. The named Plaintiffs raise predominantly common factual and legal  
4 questions that can be answered for all Plaintiff Class members  
5 through a single class-wide proceeding, which will be a superior  
6 method for adjudicating these issues for the Plaintiff Class.

7 **FACTS**

8 17. On June 23, 2021, San Francisco issued a COVID-19 Vaccination  
9 Policy requiring all employees to be fully vaccinated as a condition of employment.

10 18. Approximately 1,070 employees submitted requests to be exempted  
11 from COVID-19 vaccination due to their sincerely held religious beliefs.

12 19. The named Plaintiffs and the individual members of the Plaintiff Class  
13 have each submitted a written request for a religious accommodation in order to be  
14 exempted from COVID-19 vaccination. Like the rest of the Plaintiff Class, they  
15 affirmatively assert that their religious convictions against taking the COVID-19  
16 vaccination are sincerely held.

17 20. Generally, an employer should proceed on the assumption that a  
18 request for religious accommodation is based on sincerely held religious beliefs,  
19 practices, or observances. San Francisco has turned this standard on its head.  
20 Instead, San Francisco has instituted a detailed probe into the sincerity of the faith  
21 of its employees.

22 21. Through a standardized protocol, San Francisco has instituted a  
23 detailed inquiry for each employee requesting a religious accommodation to  
24 COVID-19 vaccination. This is done whether or not there is an objective basis for  
25 questioning either the religious nature or the sincerity of a particular belief.

26 22. San Francisco provided a PowerPoint presentation to its Department of  
27 Human Resources (HR) entitled *Medical & Religious Exemptions to COVID-19*

1 *Vaccination* (September 1, 2021). A true and correct copy of the PowerPoint  
2 accompanies this Complaint, is incorporated in full, and marked as Exhibit 4.

3 23. Under the heading *What is religion?* slide 14 reads as follows:

4 

- 5 • No political, philosophical, scientific, sociological, ecological,  
charitable groups
- 6 • No conspiracy theorists
- 7 • No personal choices or fears cloaked in religion

8 Although a determination of what is a “religious” belief or practice  
9 entitled to constitutional protection may present a most delicate  
10 question, the very concept of ordered liberty precludes allowing every  
11 person to make his own standards on matters of conduct in which  
12 society as a whole has important interests. *Friedman v. Southern Cal.*  
13 *Permanente Medical Group* (2002) 102 Cal. App. 4th 39.

14 24. San Francisco’s position on religious accommodation, reflected in  
15 slide 14, resulted in the denial of its employees’ requests for religious  
16 accommodation.

17 25. Employees are rejected by San Francisco if they merely mention non-  
18 religious views *along with* their religious views. Some employees have religious  
19 convictions that overlap religious and political views. Their views are not isolated  
20 teachings but part and parcel of comprehensive religious belief systems.

21 26. Slide 15 directs HR personnel to “get specific belief, tenet or  
22 observance that conflicts with the vaccine requirement.” San Francisco’s position  
23 regarding religious sincerity is to require narrow focus as to the COVID-19 vaccine.  
24 This position results in religious employees being deemed insincere if their  
25 convictions are based on broad theological principals. For example, an employee  
26 might believe in the sanctity of life or that a Christian’s body literally houses the  
27 Holy Ghost. The first conviction would preclude the use of any substance that was  
28 developed through the use of aborted fetal tissue. The second belief would prevent

1 an adherent from ingesting a substance they thought could harm them, thus not  
2 treating the body with the sacredness that the fleshly temple of God deserves.

3 27. Slide 16 directs HR personnel to “[l]ook for factual inaccuracies in  
4 beliefs, i.e., the vaccines contain aborted fetal cells . . . the vaccine causes sterility.”  
5 San Francisco’s position regarding claimed “factual inaccuracies” is an inquiry  
6 outside of the issue of whether the belief is both religious and sincerely held. A  
7 finding of claimed “factual inaccuracies” resulted in the faith of employees being  
8 wrongfully deemed as insincere.

9 28. San Francisco provided employees with a declaration, to be signed  
10 under penalty of perjury, for religious leaders entitled, “Declaration in Support of  
11 Employee Religious Exemption Request (COVID-19)” [sic] (Religious Leader  
12 Declaration). A true and correct copy of the Religious Leader Declaration  
13 accompanies this Complaint, is incorporated in full, and marked as Exhibit 5.

14 29. The Religious Leader Declaration provides in part:

15 Does the religion or belief system . . . requires [sic] all adherents to  
16 abstain from the COVID-19 vaccination because the vaccination  
17 conflicts with the tenets, practices and observations [sic] of a  
18 recognized church, religious denomination, or recognized religious  
organization:

19   YES     NO   If YES, please cite the specific tenet, practice or  
observation [sic] that conflicts with the COVID-19 vaccination  
requirement, and/or explain how it is followed.

20 30. San Francisco’s use of the Religious Leader Declaration results in the  
21 denial of religious accommodation to employees because it requires (1) universal  
22 abstinence (i.e., all adherents of a particular religion, denomination, or sect) from  
23 COVID-19 vaccination, (2) a specific tenet, practice or observance that conflicts  
24 with receipt of the COVID-19 vaccine, and (3) membership in a “recognized  
25 church, denomination or organization.”

1       31. San Francisco’s requirement of “universal abstinence” is not what Title  
2 VII and FEHA require because it assumes that an employee is insincere simply  
3 because the employee adheres to some common practices of his or her faith  
4 tradition but not others. Likewise, San Francisco penalizes the faithful by denying  
5 religious accommodations to the COVID-19 vaccination for employees whose  
6 practices deviate from the commonly followed tenets of the employee’s religion.  
7 This deviation speaks only to orthodoxy – a practice which state actors cannot  
8 indulge – rather than actual sincerity.

9       32. San Francisco also requires, and/or gives greater consideration to,  
10      those belonging to a recognized church, denomination, or organization. This  
11      results in depriving employees of their constitutional and statutory religious  
12      liberties if they adhere to nontraditional religious beliefs, practices, or observances.  
13      This requirement has resulted in the unlawful denial of religious accommodation of  
14      employees.

15       33. San Francisco’s HR issued a document to the employees in its  
16 department who process requests for religious accommodation. A true and correct  
17 copy of *Tips for Processing Religious Accommodation Vaccine Exemption*  
18 *Requests* (Issued September 1, 2021) accompanies this Complaint, is incorporated  
19 in full, and marked as Exhibit 6 (herein described as “Tips”).

34. One of the tips for HR evaluators is to “make sure the employee  
35 responds to question #4, regarding prior vaccinations and their religious beliefs.”  
36 This tip regarding past vaccinations has resulted in San Francisco deeming  
37 employees who have previously been vaccinated as insincere.

24       35. San Francisco asks employees seeking religious accommodations  
25 whether they have ever taken vaccines for measles, chickenpox, hepatitis A, or  
26 influenza.

36. San Francisco asks employees seeking religious accommodations whether they have had their children take any vaccines.

37. San Francisco asks employees seeking religious accommodations whether they have ever taken Tylenol, Pepto Bismol, Aspirin, Tums, Lipitor, Senokot, Motrin, Ibuprofen, Maalox, Ex-Lax, Benadryl, Sudafed, Albuterol, Preparation H, Claritin, Zoloft, Prilosec OTC, and Azithromycin.

38. Tips cautions reviewers that “most recognized religions do not prohibit vaccinations. A non-exhaustive list of religious faiths and their stance on vaccination can be found here: <https://www.vumc.org/health-wellness/news-resource-articles/immunizations-and-religion>.” As a result of this position of looking to whether a particular religious faith has a position on vaccination, San Francisco denied requests for religious accommodation of employees who belong to faith groups that did not broadly oppose vaccination.

39. Tips also specifically calls into question the validity of specific religious beliefs related to the sanctity of life:

With respect to the COVID-19 vaccine specifically, a statement that the employee is refusing the vaccine due to concerns about the use of fetal cells may not be a qualifying religious belief because neither Pfizer nor Moderna vaccines contain cells. (*See, Los Angeles County COVID-19 Vaccine and Fetal Cell Lines* [http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/vaccine/VaccineDevelopment\\_FetalCelllines.pdf](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/docs/vaccine/VaccineDevelopment_FetalCelllines.pdf).” Ex.6, p. 2.

40. The referenced document by Tips is from Los Angeles County and quotes the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops which reads, in part, “neither vaccine is completely free from any use of abortion-derived cell lines.” The Conference of Catholic Bishops goes on to state that “one may receive any of the clinically recommended vaccines in good conscience with the assurance that reception of such vaccines does not involve immoral cooperation in abortion.” Similarly, the document states that “the Catholic Church and the Southern Baptist

1 Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission have both stated that **receiving a COVID-19 vaccine that required fetal cell lines for production or manufacture is**  
2 **morally acceptable.**" *Id.* (Emphasis in original).

3  
4 41. On the issue of the sanctity of life and the use of COVID-19 vaccines,  
5 San Francisco is either substituting its judgment—or that of specific religious  
6 bodies—for the sincerely held beliefs of its employees. Moreover, the Los Angeles  
7 County document that San Francisco utilizes is a state-sponsored attempt to talk  
8 persons of faith out of their religious convictions. This is conduct that the First  
9 Amendment's religion clauses forbid.

10  
11 42. Tips also claims that other vaccines such as hepatitis A, rubella, and  
12 rabies used fetal cell lines. "If the employee has previously received other vaccines  
13 without concern, the claimed belief may not be religious." Ex. 6, p. 2. This tip  
14 presumes that the employee had knowledge of the fetal cell lines used in such  
vaccines.

15  
16 43. San Francisco's HR evaluators are coached in determining if there is a  
"reasonable objective basis for questioning their sincerity":

17  
18 The following are a few objective facts that may raise questions about  
whether an exemption request is based on a sincerely held belief:

19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24

- The employee only recently adopted the stated belief, i.e., this year or since the start of the pandemic.
- The request is accompanied by a declaration or letter from an online 'church' or pastor.
- The employee provides vague or incomplete information about their religious beliefs.
- The employee has previously accepted other vaccinations, and now has a different position regarding only the COVID-19 vaccination.

25 Ex. 6, p. 3.

26  
27 44. Employees are subjected to a regulatory religious crucible of ten  
questions, "to be used as needed." Below are some of those questions:

- Please identify the specific religious tenet that prohibits COVID-19 vaccination.
- Please identify the Christian/Muslim/Jewish/etc. Sect of denomination that teaches that COVID-19 vaccination is prohibited.
- The [Vatican/insert religious authoritative or governing body]<sup>1</sup> has endorsed the COVID-19 vaccines and pronounced that the connection between the fetal cell lines used in vaccine testing and actual abortion is sufficiently remote and the pandemic sufficiently serious to allow members to receive the vaccine in good conscience. Are your beliefs contrary to this pronouncement? If so, why?
- Please identify the specific religious tenet, practice or observance that prohibits receiving vaccines developed or tested using fetal cell lines.

Ex. 6, p. 4. The third bullet point is calculated to identify heretics.

45. HR evaluators are told to seek information from third-party clerics regarding the employee's religious beliefs under the following circumstances:

- Employee provides vague or incomplete responses to questions about their religious beliefs or belief systems.
- Employee's religion or belief system is not well-known, or has a structure that is not like traditional religions.
- Employee statements objectively raise questions regarding whether the employee's belief is part of a religion or belief system.
- Employee actions are inconsistent with the alleged religious beliefs.

Ex. 6, p. 4. The fourth bullet point is calculated to identify hypocrites.

46. On San Francisco's standardized form entitled *Reasonable Accommodation Determination (COVID-19 Vaccination Exemption)* a box was checked **DENIED** for members of the Plaintiff Class. See Exhibit 2.

47. The protocol and standardized forms used by HR evaluators comprise a detailed, individualized assessment.

<sup>1</sup> Brackets appear in the original.

48. San Francisco viewed the approximately 1,000 religious employees who sought religious accommodation as either hypocrites or heretics and thus denied their requests.

49. A small percentage of requests for religious accommodation were found to be sincere. That minute percentage of employees were granted an “accommodation” of placement on a 60-day citywide job search. Since all jobs required vaccination, this search was a fool’s errand.

50. Plaintiffs believe and thereon allege that some employees who sought medical exemptions were approved by San Francisco.

51. San Francisco denies religious accommodations as an undue hardship because it asserts that those who are unvaccinated pose a danger to themselves, coworkers, and the public.

52. In a published statement, the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) stated that Delta infection resulted in similarly high COVID-19 viral loads in vaccinated and unvaccinated people.<sup>2</sup> CDC Director Rochelle Walensky has confirmed that COVID-19-positive individuals carry the same “viral load” (equivalent to the risk of spreading infection) whether they are vaccinated or unvaccinated.<sup>3</sup>

53. The CDC Director's statement was based on a study in the summer of 2021 which tested vaccinated and unvaccinated persons and found: "Cycle

<sup>2</sup> Statement from CDC Director Rochelle P. Walensky issued on July 30, 2021 and available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2021/s0730-mmwr-covid-19.html> downloaded on July 5, 2022.

3 *Id*

1 threshold values [(COVID-19 viral loads)] were similar among specimens from  
2 patients who were fully vaccinated and those who were not.”<sup>4</sup>

3 54. Later studies have found that the viral load associated with COVID-19  
4 variants such as Omicron also does not vary based upon vaccination status: “[F]ully  
5 vaccinated individuals with breakthrough infections have peak viral load similar to  
6 unvaccinated cases and can efficiently transmit infection in household settings,  
7 including to fully vaccinated contacts.”<sup>5</sup>

8 55. In another official statement, the CDC has confirmed those studies and  
9 stated that it expects that anyone with an Omicron infection, regardless of  
10 vaccination status or whether or not they have symptoms, can spread the virus to  
11 others.<sup>6</sup>

12 56. Because the viral loads are no different for the vaccinated and the  
13 unvaccinated, San Francisco’s position that the unvaccinated pose a danger to  
14 themselves, coworkers, and the public, but that the vaccinated do not pose this  
15 danger, is not consistent with the above-cited statements from the CDC.

16 ///

17 ///

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18 <sup>4</sup> “Outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 Infections, Including COVID-19 Vaccine  
19 Breakthrough Infections, Associated with Large Public Gatherings —  
20 Barnstable County, Massachusetts, July 2021” *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly  
Report, CDC* (July 30, 2021), available at:  
21 [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7031e2.htm?s\\_cid=mm7031e2\\_w](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7031e2.htm?s_cid=mm7031e2_w).

22 <sup>5</sup> David W. Eyre, B.M., B.Ch., D.Phil. et al. *Effect of Covid-19 Vaccination on  
23 Transmission of Alpha and Delta Variants*, *New England J. Med* 386:744-756  
24 (February 24, 2022) available at:  
25 <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa2116597> downloaded on July 6,  
26 2022.

27 <sup>6</sup> “Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know” *CDC* (March 29, 2022)  
available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/variants/omicron-variant.html>.

## **FIRST CAUSE OF ACTION**

## **FAILURE TO PROVIDE RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION Violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

# All Plaintiffs Against All Government Defendants (42 U.S.C. § 2000e)

57. Plaintiffs repeat and reallege the allegations above and incorporate those allegations herein by reference.

58. At all times relevant hereto, Title VII was in full force and effect and was binding on San Francisco.

59. At all times relevant hereto, the Plaintiffs were performing competently in the positions they held as employees of San Francisco.

60. Plaintiffs have bona fide religious beliefs that conflict with receiving the COVID-19 vaccination; they have informed their employer of such beliefs. The Plaintiffs were disciplined for failure to comply with the conflicting employment requirement.

61. Title VII makes it an unlawful employment practice to fail or refuse to reasonably accommodate the religious beliefs and practices of an employee.

62. San Francisco failed to provide reasonable alternative means of accommodating the religious belief or observance that was in conflict with the COVID-19 vaccination work requirement.

63. There is a dispute between the Plaintiffs and Defendant. San Francisco asserts that it can undertake a detailed probe of the sincerity of the religious beliefs of its employees; this includes placing a burden on the Plaintiff Class to provide an objective basis for religious convictions regarding the refusal to take the COVID-19 vaccination. Plaintiffs disagree. Because faith is intrinsically subjective, a religious objector cannot be held to an objective measure of proof regarding what lay within his or her heart, mind, and soul. Belief in what one may demonstrate to the senses is not faith. Plaintiffs assert that Title VII presumes sincerity of belief by an

1 employee and therefore San Francisco's standardized practice of a rigorous  
2 inquisition is an unlawful standard. The Plaintiffs' legal position is that, although  
3 an employee's faith may be deemed as heresy to some and incomprehensible to  
4 others, employers cannot require orthodoxy of employees according to a recognized  
5 religion or demand that employees be put to the proof of their religious beliefs.

6 64. There is a dispute between the Plaintiffs and Defendant. San  
7 Francisco universally asserts that every unvaccinated employee poses a threat to the  
8 health and safety of themselves, coworkers, and the public. San Francisco asserts  
9 that an accommodation for any religious adherent poses an undue hardship on San  
10 Francisco, which is more than a *de minimis* burden. Plaintiffs disagree. San  
11 Francisco has granted medical exemptions to some of its employees. The risks  
12 involving employees who receive medical exemptions to the COVID-19  
13 vaccination stand as identical to the unvaccinated employees of faith. What is  
14 more, terminating unvaccinated religious employees does not place San Francisco  
15 in a safer position relative to the spread of COVID-19. Employees that have been  
16 fired have not been confined to their homes. They can move about freely within the  
17 City and County. Employees have not been sentenced to exile; while still within  
18 San Francisco, terminated employees ride public transportation, enter stores to  
19 purchase goods and services, conduct business in government offices, attend houses  
20 of worship, and are in the stands at sporting events. Therefore, any claimed  
21 hardship that keeping an employee on the payroll would incur is not substantially  
22 mitigated by firing the employee.

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## **SECOND CAUSE OF ACTION**

# RELIGION CLAUSES

## **First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution**

## All Plaintiffs Against All Government Defendants

(42 U.S.C. § 1983)

65. The Plaintiffs repeat and reallege the allegations above and incorporate those allegations herein by reference.

66. The right to free exercise of religion is a right protected and guaranteed by the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The liberties under the First Amendment apply to the states and their political subdivisions through the Fourteenth Amendment.

67. The actions of San Francisco have been, and continue to be, done under color of law.

68. The Plaintiffs have sincerely held religious beliefs that compel them to refuse the COVID-19 vaccine.

69. San Francisco's detailed probe into the beliefs of the Plaintiff Class exceeds sincerity by determining orthodoxy, verity of beliefs, and hypocrisy.

70. The depth of San Francisco's inquiry into the faith of employees who request religious accommodations is structured such that employees are denied an accommodation because they are perceived by the government to not be as devout of a member of their religion as state actors believe the employee should be. This occurs by HR evaluators determining the following:

- (1) whether the employee is part of a recognized religion;
- (2) whether the employee's beliefs are in line with the teachings of religious authorities;
- (3) whether the religion holds a universal prohibition against vaccination; and
- (4) whether the beliefs should be called into question as judged by the presence of (a) alleged inconsistencies or (b) "factual inaccuracies."

71. San Francisco HR evaluators are taking on the role that the First Amendment reserves to ecclesiastical courts, not government officials.

72. The protocol HR evaluators use imposes requirements that stand as hostile to the religious beliefs of the Plaintiff Class and acts in a manner that passes judgment upon, or presupposes the illegitimacy of, religious beliefs and practices. Therefore, the protocol used is not neutral.

73. The protocol HR evaluators use involves individualized assessments and thus are not neutral and generally applicable.

74. San Francisco has engaged in indirect coercion and penalties on the Plaintiff Class for the exercise of their religion. In doing so, San Francisco is excluding religious observers from continued employment.

75. The vaccination requirement forces the Plaintiff Class to choose between receiving the COVID-19 vaccine in violation of their sincerely held religious beliefs or being fired, thus imposing a substantial burden on the Plaintiffs and the Plaintiff Class and interfering with, and depriving them of, the enjoyment of the religious liberties guaranteed by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, as made applicable to the states through the Fourteenth Amendment.

**THIRD CAUSE OF ACTION**  
**FAILURE TO PROVIDE RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATION**  
**Violation of the California Fair Employment and Housing Act**  
All Plaintiffs Against All Government Defendants  
(Gov. Code § 12900 et seq.)

76. The Plaintiffs repeat and reallege the allegations above and incorporate those allegations herein by reference.

77. At all times relevant hereto, FEHA was in full force and effect and was binding on San Francisco.

78. San Francisco failed to provide reasonable alternative means of accommodating the religious belief or observance that conflicted with the work requirement, i.e., COVID-19 vaccination.

79. There is a dispute between the Plaintiffs and Defendant. San Francisco universally asserts that every unvaccinated employee poses a threat to the health and safety of themselves, coworkers, and the public. San Francisco asserts that an accommodation for any unvaccinated religious adherent imposes an undue burden on San Francisco. Plaintiffs disagree. Plaintiffs assert that accommodating the Plaintiffs does not pose a *significant difficulty or expense* on San Francisco per Gov. Code § 12926(u).

80. Plaintiffs are entitled to further relief as more fully set forth below in their Prayer for Relief.

## PRAYER FOR RELIEF

WHEREFORE, Plaintiffs request that the Court enter judgment in their favor, and against the Defendant, for full relief, including the following:

a. Declaratory judgment that San Francisco's protocol for determining sincerity of faith in whole, or in part, on its face, and as applied, does not comport with the requirements of Title VII;

b. Declaratory judgment that San Francisco's protocol for determining sincerity of faith in whole, or in part, on its face, and as applied, does not comport with the requirements of FEHA;

c. Declaratory judgment that San Francisco's protocol for determining sincerity of faith is in whole, or in part, on its face, and as applied, is violative of the religion clauses of the First Amendment;

d. Declaratory judgment that San Francisco's universal declaration that each and every unvaccinated-religious-objector-employee poses a danger to the

1 employee, co-workers, and thus accommodation poses an undue hardship on San  
2 Francisco, fails the reasonableness requirement under Title VII;

3 e. Declaratory judgment that San Francisco's universal declaration that  
4 each and every unvaccinated-religious-objector-employee poses a danger to the  
5 employee, co-workers, and thus accommodation poses an undue hardship on San  
6 Francisco, fails the reasonableness requirement under FEHA;

7 f. Declaratory judgment that providing a religious accommodation does  
8 not impose an undue hardship on San Francisco under Title VII;

9 g. Declaratory judgment that providing a religious accommodation does  
10 not impose an undue hardship on San Francisco under FEHA;

11 h. Preliminary and permanent injunction prohibiting San Francisco's  
12 protocol for determining sincerity of faith;

13 i. Equitable relief in the form of an order setting aside the denials for  
14 accommodation and that the Plaintiff Class receive *de novo* consideration of their  
15 accommodation requests;

16 j. Preliminary and permanent injunction prohibiting San Francisco from  
17 deeming the Plaintiff Class as a danger to themselves, coworkers, and the public;

18 k. An award for actual, consequential, and incidental financial losses,  
19 including, but not limited to lost back pay, front pay, benefits, and other  
20 compensation plus interest;

21 l. An award of compensatory damages;

22 m. Restoration of employee benefits, including, but not limited to, medical  
23 benefits, pensions, and insurance;

24 n. Restore vacation days, comp hours, and lost time hours;

25 o. Attorneys' fees and costs; and

26 p. Any and all other appropriate relief to which the Plaintiffs may be  
27 entitled including all "appropriate relief" within the scope of F.R.C.P. 54(c).

1 Dated: July 26, 2022  
2

3 /s/ Kevin T. Snider  
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